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Valorization of waste stem from peatland management as a substitution to horticultural peat

In the past, Briérons (*people from Brière region, NW France*) were living thanks to the products of the swamp: some breeding, hunting and fishing, reed to cover the houses, peat as a fuel and “noir¹” to improve the gardens or to export. All these vital activities shaped the swamp. Reed harvesting and extraction of the “noir” notably maintained it, restricting its filling.

Nowadays, the number of users involved in its upkeep has considerably decreased. Reed bed has strongly colonized grasslands and open waters. Swamp is filling in. To struggle against this progression, the Natural Regional Park of Brière² and the management committee of Grande Brière Mottière³ (CSGBM) are carrying out work on canals and water bodies cleaning using power shovels and a suction-type dredger.

The « noir de Brière », organic mud stem of the work of upkeep and restoration of the Brière swamp, is a quickly renewable material. Considering its agronomic qualities, a horticultural valorization appears as possible. So the “noir” can be used in “ecological” growing media.

For some years the Natural Regional Park of Brière, the management committee of Grande Brière Mottière and the Florentaise company, which produces and markets vegetable moulds and growing media, have tried the exploitation of this organic matter. A master arrangement has been signed between CSGBM and Florentaise in 1999. It defines basic principles for the interventions of the company in Grande Brière Mottière. An order of the prefect signed in May 2005 authorizes Florentaise to extract and market the “noir de Brière”. The extraction of authorized materials is only about “noir de Brière”, which is the current deposit of organic mud with the exclusion of ancient and fossil sediments (sand, clay, peat), and with external valorization purpose.

Florentaise became involved with the WWF in its fight for environment safing by concluding a partnership. A trademark with brand licence was born thanks to this co-operation.

Florentaise offers a whole range of products with a WWF seal of approval: fertilizers and growing media. Among the growing media, the “universal” one is made of peat, Hortifibre and “Terre Noire de Brière”. This compressed growing medium is specially designed for repotting and planting of all plants, shrubs and garden vegetables.

Marketing the upkeeping residues of the Natural Regional Park of Brière fits peatland management issues while offering an alternative growing medium to horticultural peat.

¹ Plant debris partly decayed and forming a dark mud

² Created in 1970, it is located close to Atlantic ocean, in the middle of Guérande peninsula. Initiated and founded by the Pays de la Loire region, the Loire-Atlantique département and its 18 member municipalities, it is covering 49,000 ha.

³ Since 1838, it has carried out the management of the Grande Brière Mottière swamp, undivided co-ownership of the inhabitants of the 21 inshore municipalities, and of the activities taking place there.